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Review of *The Grads Are Playing Tonight! The Story of the Edmonton Commercial Graduates Basketball Club* by M. Ann Hall

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The Grads Are Playing Tonight! The Story of the Edmonton Commercial Graduates Basketball Club. By M. Ann Hall. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2011. xxiv + 352 pp. Photographs, illustrations, appendices, notes, sources, index. \$29.95 paper.

M. Ann Hall, author of *The Girl and the Game* (2002), one of the “must read” books on Canadian women’s sport history, brings us this fascinating look at the Edmonton Commercial Graduates Basketball Club. Historians’ fascination with the Edmonton Grads, perhaps the most well-known story in Canadian women’s sport history, has resulted in numerous published articles over the last two decades and a 1987 National Film Board of Canada film, *Shooting Stars*. Yet this is the first comprehensive book about the club. In an extensively researched, accessible, yet detailed read, Hall reveals new insights into the team, the organization, the coach (J. Percy Page), and the lives of the players.

Hall lays out the evolution of the Club, the impact it had as a civic booster, the opportunities provided to the team’s young working women through international travel, and the factors that contributed to their success, while weaving together personal biographies of the players, Coach Page, and the Grads family. Hall also effectively places the story of the Grads organization within the history of basketball in North America and Europe, discussing

the debates over gender-based rules, social and medical opinion during the 1920s and 1930s about the appropriate uses of women’s bodies, and the international stage of women’s sport during this period, highlighting the International Olympic Committee’s reluctance to include some women’s sports and events on the Olympic program. Specific to the Great Plains, Hall analyzes the impact of the team on the city of Edmonton—a growing municipality at the time—and how its legacy was important to the city decades after the team folded. For those wanting a more chronological accounting of the team from 1915 to 1940, Hall provides an impressive thirty-four page timeline following chapter 10 that details each season of the Club, including player rosters and highlights of significant triumphs, challenges, and events.

The book’s main strength is perhaps also its greatest weakness. In three chapters, Hall includes extensive biographies of all the players who graced the basketball court wearing the Grads jersey from 1915 until the team folded in 1940. Despite this in-depth look at the women and their lives, for the most part their voices are eerily absent from the text, as Hall acknowledges in the introduction. By the time this research was conducted, only a few of the Grads were still alive for Hall to interview. In the cases where interviews were conducted, however, the voices of these women still do not appear very often in the text, leaving me wanting more. How did the women themselves remember their experience as Grads and its impact on their lives?

The Grads Are Playing Tonight! is an important and long-awaited contribution to women’s sport history scholarship. Indeed, this book will be of interest not only to undergraduate and graduate students studying Canadian sport history, but also to academic, public, and Great Plains historians alike.

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